

VZCZCXRO6553  
PP RUEHBZ RUEH DU RUEHGI RUEHJO RUEHMR RUEHRN  
DE RUEH KI #0370/01 0861454  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 271454Z MAR 07  
FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5870  
INFO RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE  
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE  
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 000370

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [KPKO](#) [MOPS](#) [CG](#)  
SUBJECT: KINSHASA UPDATE 3/27: KABILA DEFENDS ACTIONS  
AGAINST BEMBA

REF: KINSHASA 361 AND PREVIOUS

¶1. (U) Summary: President Kabila defended the use of force against Jean-Pierre Bemba's guard forces in a March 26 press conference, declaring that "order had to be restored at all cost." Bemba, who remains in the South African embassy compound, said in a press interview Kabila is determined to get rid of him and claimed he will leave the country if his security cannot be guaranteed. Elements of Bemba's guard in his home province of Equateur have signaled to military officials their willingness to integrate. Congolese economic officials are reviewing potential relief measures in the wake of looting during the March 22-23 fighting. End summary.

¶2. (U) President Kabila made his first public statements on the March 22-23 fighting in Kinshasa between elements of the Congolese military (FARDC) and Senator and former Vice President Jean-Pierre Bemba's guard forces. In a nationally-televised press conference from the presidential offices, Kabila defended the use of force, saying "order had to be restored at all cost." Kabila portrayed the dispute with Bemba as military rather than political. He added that Bemba had attempted to put himself above the law, and reiterated an earlier statement by the Council of Ministers March 24 that judicial procedures had been started against the former vice president.

¶3. (U) In an interview published by "Le Monde" March 26, Bemba charged Kabila is determined to "get rid" of him and to silence the political opposition. He claimed the FARDC attack against him and his guard forces was planned in advance and meant to avoid any negotiations over the size of his security detail. Bemba said that if he does not receive sufficient guarantees for his security, he will go into exile.

¶4. (SBU) Bemba remains with his wife and children at the South African embassy compound. Bemba's interview with "Le Monde" apparently violated an agreement he had with his hosts to cease press interviews from his location. South African Embassy officials also told us there are no immediate plans for South African Minister of Local and Provincial Government Sydney Mufamadi to travel to Kinshasa.

¶5. (SBU) Members of Bemba's guard force in his home province have indicated to military officials their willingness to integrate into the FARDC. MONUC officials report Bemba forces have been turning themselves in to FARDC and MONUC officials in Mbandaka and Gemena. Embassy contacts in Equateur told us Bemba guard commander Captain Jose Ewale released a statement March 26 in Gemena saying his forces were ready to integrate. FARDC Land Forces Commander General Gabriel Amisi is meeting Bemba's forces in Gemena and Gbadolite this week to discuss

the options of integration and demobilization.

¶6. (U) Bemba's Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC) party issued a statement March 26 condemning the March 22-23 violence and "threats" against Bemba. The communique, signed by MLC Secretary General Francois Mwamba, conveyed the party's regret that violence prevailed over dialogue and urged that a political solution be found to the crisis. The MLC stated it will remain committed to the political process as a strong and republican opposition.

¶7. (SBU) The Kinshasa business community suffered extensive losses as a result of the violence -- in some cases from physical property damage and looting, in addition to the loss of business over several days. The most serious damage occurred on and around Gombe's main Boulevard de 30 Juin, where some of the most serious fighting took place. Looting was reported at some Gombe residences, and several offices, including the Central Bank building, were damaged by mortar and weapons fire. Several stores along the boulevard, especially those selling easily portable items like cell phones and clothing, were the hardest hit according to Embassy contacts. The Ministry of Economy is trying to assess total losses, but it is too early to determine the impact on investment and local commerce. The Federation of Congolese Businesses is expected to meet March 28 with the GDRC's economic and financial ministries to discuss temporary business relief measures.

¶8. (U) European Union Great Lakes Special Envoy Roeland Van de Geer met with Kabila and Prime Minister Gizenga March 26. Van de Geer said he was concerned by the events of March 22-23 but pleased with Kabila's efforts to consolidate

KINSHASA 00000370 002 OF 002

democracy. He added he was confident in the future of the RDC and encouraged a frank dialogue among all Congolese to put an end to the current crisis. Van de Geer, who had finished his first visit to the DRC March 20, returned to Kinshasa from Kampala to review the situation.

¶9. (SBU) French Cooperation Minister Brigitte Girardin, who signed a 200 million Euro development agreement with the GDRC March 24, met with Kabila during her brief Kinshasa visit. According to French diplomatic officials, Kabila told Girardin that Bemba had passed the limits of acceptable behavior and be brought to justice. Girardin also spoke by phone March 24 with Bemba, who indicated his unwillingness to go before the Congolese courts.

¶10. (U) The chiefs of mission of EU members states in Kinshasa released a declaration March 27 expressing their "indignation" following the violence and condemning the violations committed by both sides. Deploing the loss of life, they called the military's use of force premature and unsuited for achieving the objective of disarming Bemba's forces. The chiefs of mission said their primary concerns are the victims and the future of the Congolese people, and noted as well the serious violation of international norms, including the protection of diplomatic missions and personnel.

¶11. (SBU) The "P3-plus-two" chiefs of mission (U.K., U.S., France, South Africa, and Belgium) will meet at 1700 with SRSG Swing to discuss the current situation.  
MEECE